

# **FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PALESTINE, TEXAS**

## **POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The church is a covenant community. A covenant is a bonding agreement between two parties. Our covenant is based upon a covenant initiated by God with humanity beginning with Abraham. As Christians we believe that this covenant is most fully expressed in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church exists as the body of Christ in the world, and as such our relationship with one another within that body is governed by our understanding of the God revealed in Jesus Christ. It is in attempting to follow that example that First UMC, Palestine establishes these policies to provide structure and policy for how adults and children are to have contact within our covenant community.

It is our desire as a community to live out the great commandment to "...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and... you shall love your neighbor as yourself."(Matt. 22:37-39) as well as the great commission to "...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19,20)

Our Lord has expressly given to little children a place among the people of God, which holy privilege must not be denied them. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God (Mt. 19:14)." Since children are to be full participants in the life of the church special safeguards must be in place to ensure their safety.

Adults have a special relationship with children in the church. They are entrusted with living as examples, teaching the faith, and providing guidance and counsel that helps a child grow in the way that leads to abundant and eternal life.

These policies are intended to provide dual protection; protection for children against inappropriate behaviors and protection for adults against false accusation.

Because of our desire to live in community as the body of Christ and seeking to fulfill the calling of love and justice as revealed in the life of our Lord, we adopt the following policies to assist us in being faithful to the covenant relationship to which God calls us.

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Members of First United Methodist Church of Palestine Texas come from a variety of experiences, backgrounds and needs. First Church is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children and youth who participate in any First Church Ministry. Also, First Church is committed to taking the necessary precautions to protect any person working in a First Church Ministry from false accusations or suspicions.

## SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Members of First Church recognize the need to have formal, written policies and procedures to:

1. Prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or appearance of abuse of children and youth
2. Protect Workers from false accusations and/or suspicions
3. Take immediate action on reported incidents.

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in Workers but instead are intended to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms shall be utilized within this document.

### Clergy:

Refers to an Ordained Pastor and/or Associate Pastor appointed by the Texas Annual Conference to the First United Methodist Church of Palestine.

### Certification / Certified / Special Permission:

Refers to an official process of verifying an individual's criminal record background to assure they meet the minimum standards for working with protected persons in First Church. After the certification confirms the standards are met, the worker is certified to work with protected persons at First Church. The Clergy and one member of the Safe Sanctuary Committee can grant special permission status. This special permission status is only valid until certification is completed or for a maximum of 21 days.

### Criminal History:

Refers to any items reported on a person's criminal records, including arrests, charges, indictments, convictions, probations and deferred adjudications.

### Incident of Abuse & Neglect:

As defined by the Texas Family Code – Child Abuse & Neglect (Appendix A)

### Ministry(ies):

Shall mean on campus, or church sponsored off campus, activities or programs, involving Protected Persons, including but not limited to those related to child care, Boy/Girl Scouts, pre-school, district and conference youth events, mission trips, Sunday school, and United Methodist Youth Fellowship.

### Protected Person(s):

Shall mean children and/or youth, under the age of 18, participating in any Ministry.

### Safe Sanctuary Committee:

Is a committee of the First United Methodist Church of Palestine consisting of the:

- Senior Pastor
- Staff/Parish Relations Committee Chairperson
- Administrative Council Chairperson
- Board of Trustees Chairperson
- Ministry Council Chairperson
- Associate Pastor

This committee's primary responsibility is developing, revising, monitoring, and enforcing of the Safe Sanctuary Policies of First Church.

### Responsible Person:

Shall mean the person in charge of a particular Ministry. This person shall be responsible for coordinating applications and achieving compliance with this policy by Workers within such their particular Ministry. For the following areas of Ministry the Responsible Person is identified as:

**Program / Department**

Children's Ministry  
Nursery Ministry  
Youth Ministry  
Music Ministry  
Church Sponsored Community Ministry  
Weekday Children's Ministry  
Directors, Coordinators, Other Staff or Work Areas

**Responsible Person\*\***

Children's Coordinator  
Nursery Director  
Youth Director  
Music Director  
Applicable Coordinator  
Preschool Director  
Clergy

\*\* Clergy or the Safe Sanctuary Committee Chairperson shall be an acceptable substitute for a Responsible Person who is not available.

**Shepherd / Roamer:**

Refers to a certified worker that has the responsibility to monitor multiple classrooms or events that are occurring simultaneously. When a worker is acting in this capacity the "two worker in each room" rule will be met. The Shepherd / Roamer must physically observe all one-worker rooms on a sporadic and constant bases throughout the duration of the ministry period.

**Worker(s):**

Shall mean a person in a "position of trust" with Protected Persons (paid or volunteer) such as any clergy, staff, Sunday school leader or teacher, employee, scout leader, program director, youth counselor, hall or bathroom monitor and any other person in a leadership position, who is at least eighteen (18) years old, and involved in a Ministry.

No worker under the age of 18 shall be placed in a position of supervision over protected persons. Adult supervision shall be required for such workers.

**BEHAVIOR**

The following behaviors are prohibited for Workers:

- Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury
- Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact
- Making any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors
- Engaging in verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, e.g. back rubs, massages, kissing, or similar contact
- Physical discipline, such as spanking

Touching to comfort or affirm a Protected Person in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are suggested instead of full body contact. Appropriate touching need not be completely avoided, but is acceptable only in public. Workers shall be aware of how it looks and how the person being contacted may interpret the contact.

The following are unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any ministry:

- Tobacco - presence or use
- Alcohol - presence or use
- Illegal drugs - presence or use
- Illegal firearms or other weapons
- Foul or offensive language

The said examples are not "all-inclusive". Any inappropriate behavior that contravenes the Statement of Purpose shall be considered prohibited behavior.

## **WORKER ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS**

Persons shall meet the requirements and approvals for service set out herein in order to be a Worker in a Ministry.

### **Application Process**

- Workers shall complete the Employment Application or Volunteer Application (Appendices B or C) and a Form for Authorization for Release of Information (Appendix D) for criminal records check.

### **Certification Process**

- A criminal records check shall be made on all applicants & volunteers by:  
Background Information Systems  
10501 N. Central Expressway  
Suite 309  
Dallas, Texas 75231

Confidential results will be given to the Safe Sanctuary Committee. Issues requiring a discussion with the Clergy or designate will be treated with confidentiality. The applicant or volunteer will be extended the care and ministry of the church in determining appropriate placement for service.

- The appropriate staff member as delegated by the Safe Sanctuary Committee shall check two of the references found on the Employment and Volunteer Application. The Employee and Volunteer Reference Check Form (Appendix E) shall be used to document discussions and findings.
- The information on the Employment and Volunteer Application will be used to screen any potential driver(s) through the church's insurance company to determine if the potential driver is a safe driver.
- Re-checks of each worker & volunteer shall be conducted on a yearly basis.

### **Approval / Disapproval Process**

- Persons having a Criminal History of any of the following types of offenses shall be disapproved and not be allowed to serve in any Ministry:
  - Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful
  - Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.
- Other offenses, depending on how recent, the frequency, and nature may also preclude an applicant or Worker from serving in a Ministry. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Clergy and the Safe Sanctuary Committee. In such cases, the determining factors will be the best interests, safety and well being of the Protected Persons. Any applicant or Worker whose Criminal History is such that his or her approval is subject to decision by the Clergy and the Safe Sanctuary Committee, will be given the opportunity to explain the circumstances to the Clergy and the Safe Sanctuary Committee.
- Sunday School teachers shall be members of First Church for three (3) or more months prior to beginning service. Exceptions will be allowed only if the applicant provides a recommendation letter from a pastor and/or relevant staff person at a prior church of applicant, or if written recommendations are received from three (3) current members of First Church, who have been members for more than one (1) year.
- Workers shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age to drive. Drivers must have a valid Texas driver's license to drive a church vehicle. If driving a personal vehicle on church business must also have proof of insurance covering at least liability and un-insured motorist.

- Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- Lying on an application is cause for removal from service in a Ministry.
- Workers who refuse to comply with this policy or repeatedly fail to follow it shall be subject to dismissal.
- Workers who do not attend mandatory training are subject to dismissal.
- Workers may begin working in a Ministry when:
  - The application paperwork and certification work is complete and the person is found to meet the acceptance standards, or
  - Special permission is granted from the Senior Clergy and one member of the Safe Sanctuary Committee. This special permission status is only valid until certification is completed or for a maximum of 21 days.

## **GENERAL POLICY**

### **Staffing**

- A minimum of two (2) Workers shall be present in any room or area where Protected Persons are participating.
- If two workers are not available to physically be in each room a Shepherd will satisfy the two-worker requirement. The Shepherd must physically observe all one-worker rooms on a sporadic and constant base throughout the duration of the class period.
- Exceptions to the above rule include:
  - Escorting Protected Persons between on-campus buildings or in hallways
  - Monitoring the arrival or departure of Protected Persons
  - In cases of emergency care
- If the required number of Workers (or Shepherd / Monitors) cannot be obtained for the number of rooms or areas, then the group shall be combined with another group or the Ministry canceled.
- When family members work together (husband/wife/parent/child/siblings/etc.), an additional Worker shall be present. An exception will be allowed only in cases where both family members have Senior Clergy and Safe Sanctuary Committee pre-approval.

### **On Campus Policies**

- Doors to rooms shall be kept open or, in the case of rooms with Dutch doors, the top half of the door shall be kept open. It is acceptable to close the door to a room if there is a window to the hallway that allows observation of activities in the room. Under no circumstances shall a Worker be alone with a Protected Person behind a closed door with no window. Doors shall never be locked while occupied by Workers and Protected Persons, unless such doors are of the "Dutch Door" variety, and the top portion of said doors are left completely open.
- Classes shall remain in the assigned building. If there is to be a change of building, a sign shall be posted on the door providing notice of any change of location.

- Workers shall wear identification certification while working on campus in a Ministry. This I.D. certification can be in the form of an official First Church nametag, special shirt, vest, etc. This certification will signify that the Worker is approved under this policy.

### **Discipline**

- The Safe Sanctuary Committee shall be responsible to assure all Workers are instructed on the best Age-Appropriate Discipline Methods (Appendix F & G).
- The behavior of a Protected Person who is a constant disruption shall be discussed with his or her parents or legal guardian and the applicable Director. Parents or legal guardian shall be asked to attend the Ministry to observe or control the problem behavior. A Protected Person who is disruptive or a danger to him/herself or others shall be removed immediately by the Worker and the parents, legal guardian and the applicable Director shall be promptly notified.

### **Continuing Education**

- Directors shall encourage and may require Workers to attend continuing education opportunities.
- Directors shall communicate the substance of this policy to Workers, and Workers shall agree to comply with this on the Employee/Volunteer Agreement to Policy Form (Appendix H).
- Mandatory training of Workers shall be provided through the Safe Sanctuary Committee on a regular basis for:
  - Understanding the Safe Sanctuary Policy
  - Fire and Building Safety
  - CPR and first aid certification
  - Statutory requirements for the mandatory reporting of child abuse and the identification of abuse as defined by the Texas Family Code (Appendix A) and
  - Other operational guidelines

### **Communication with Parents/Legal Guardians**

- Workers should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents or legal guardians.
- Parents / legal guardians shall always be permitted to observe in a classroom. (A visitor's pass will be required to be worn to indicate the individual has approval to be in the room with Protected Persons.)
- Should a Parent / legal guardian have a concern regarding suspected abuse they shall be advised by the applicable Director where to report their concerns and be assured that their report shall be investigated and remain confidential.
- Parents / legal guardians shall be advised that they must pick up their respective Protected Person no later than ten (10) minutes after the Ministry is over unless special arrangements have been made with the Workers concerned.
- Written information concerning the sleeping accommodations for Protected Persons at any overnight event shall be given to parents / legal guardians by the applicable Director.
- A signed Parental/Guardian Consent & Emergency Medical Release Form shall be obtained for each

Protected Person in order to participate in any off-campus Ministry. (See Appendix N.)

### **ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES OF CHILDREN**

- For Nursery care for Protected Persons four (4) years and younger, a positive identity security system shall be used so that the person picking up the Protected Person can be positively identified and matched. This will involve a sign-in/sign-out sheet that must be completed by each adult that leaves and picks-up a Protected Person in the Nursery. (See Appendix K.)
- For Children's Sunday School (two (2) years through 5<sup>th</sup> grade) the Protected Persons must be picked-up by either of their parents / legal guardians. The Protected Person can be picked-up by another adult if the parent / legal guardian has provided written permission ahead of time. See attached form in Appendix L.
- Parents shall provide the Director with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where Workers shall pay particular attention to who picks up the child. See attached form in Appendix L.
- Diaper changing shall be done in the open and not behind closed doors.
- For rooms that have attached bathrooms, a Worker may assist a Protected Person in the bathroom, while keeping the door open.
- Workers shall periodically check the bathrooms.
- In order to stay in the classroom a Worker may release a Protected Person to a designated Worker serving as a Shepherd.
- The applicable Director shall maintain a student information file. This file shall contain a listing of the students enrolled in the Ministry with references or remarks as to any parent instructions or special information regarding a child in such Ministry. (See Appendix M.)

### **ADDITIONAL POLICIES FOR MINISTRIES OF YOUTH**

The two-worker rule shall be followed, except as noted below:

- Planned one-on-one Worker/youth lunches, provided they are held in public places and shall only occur if:
  - (1) Permission has been given by the parent,
  - (2) The Director has been notified, and
  - (3) Separate transportation is to be used.
- Youth/Director conferences - provided
  - (1) The conference is for a relatively brief time – during normal business hours,
  - (2) The Director informs another Worker at the beginning and end of the meeting, and
  - (3) The on-campus policies are followed.

### **ADDITIONAL POLICIES CONCERNING DRIVING, TRIPS AND OVERNIGHT STAYS**

#### **Driving Rules**

- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule applies. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, a single Worker may drive if the all the vehicles travel together.

- Occupants of vehicles shall wear seatbelts. Buses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt.
- Protected Persons, twelve (12) years and younger, shall not set in the front seat of vehicles with air bags.

### Overnight and Trip Rules

- The two-adult rule shall be followed throughout the trip. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirement of the planned activities. The ratio of adults to Protected Persons shall be 1:10. Additionally, if the group of Protected Persons contains both males and females, there shall be at least one (1) female Worker and one (1) male Worker on the trip.

## REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

### Notification Requirements

- Workers shall immediately notify a Director of any incident of abuse or violation of the above policies. However, in cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom notification should be given, he or she shall be considered absent for purposes of this reporting procedure, and the notification shall be made to that person's immediate supervisor.
- Subject to his or her obligation to report such an incident as set forth hereinafter, any person making and/or receiving such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

### Reporting Procedures - Imminent Threat

- Where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any Worker with knowledge or information about such abuse shall immediately contact another adult and take steps to ensure the safety of the Protected Person. In connection herewith, any needed emergency healthcare shall be provided, such as (1) first aid, (2) emergency services, and/or (3) transport to a hospital emergency room. The alleged victim shall be immediately removed from contact with the suspected abuser. Should the suspected abuser appear to be a continued threat, the Worker should immediately call 911 and request law enforcement assistance. The Protected Person's safety is paramount before any reporting.
- Where the abuse of a Protected Person is alleged to have occurred at home, the Protected Person is currently at home, and their safety is in doubt -- the Worker reporting the alleged abuse shall call 911 to notify the appropriate law enforcement officials.

### Reporting Procedures - Non-imminent threat

- In cases where any Worker has cause to believe that a Protected Person may have been abused or neglected, the Worker is required by state law to immediately make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency and the State of Texas – Protective & Regulatory Services.
- The worker shall complete an INCIDENT REPORT form (Appendix I) and immediately report the suspected abuse to BOTH:
  - **Palestine Police Department at 903.729.2254,**
  - **Texas Department of Protective & Regulatory Services at 800.252.5400**
- The Worker suspecting abuse shall provide the facts known with respect to the incident to the appropriate Responsible Person.

- The Responsible Person, together with the Worker shall provide the Senior Clergy with the completed INCIDENT REPORT.
- Allegations shall be taken seriously and no pre-judgments shall be made.
- Situations shall be handled confidentially with due respect for the privacy of **all parties** involved in the incident.

### **Responding to the Report of An Incident of Abuse**

The Senior Clergy receiving the report of an incident of abuse shall:

- Immediately contact parents or guardian of the alleged victim and inform them of the alleged incident and what actions have been taken. (If one parent or guardian is the alleged wrongdoer there will be no contact with either parent or guardian until after law enforcement officials and Protective & Regulatory Services have conducted their initial investigation.)
- Take confidential, reasonable steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with Protected Persons at First Church -- pending the conclusion of the investigation(s).
- Call for an emergency meeting of the Safe Sanctuary Committee and provide a verbal, confidential report on the alleged incident.
- Provide any requested assistance to law enforcement officials and Protective & Regulatory Services during their respective investigations.
- Upon completion of the investigations request a report of findings from each agency.

### **Responding to the Findings of the Agencies**

- Upon receiving the report(s) of findings from the agency(s) the Safe Sanctuary Committee will meet; evaluate the findings; determine how the findings affect members of First Church; and if needed, recommend appropriate action(s).
- Should appropriate action(s) be found necessary the Safe Sanctuary Committee will provide a written, confidential report to First Church's Staff Parish Committee for documentation and informational purposes.
- If a review of the findings reveals there is not reasonable cause to believe the alleged abuse (or other violations of the Safe Sanctuary Policy) has occurred the alleged wrongdoer may resume his or her position of service.
- If a review of the findings reveals there is reasonable cause to believe the alleged abuse (or other violations of the Safe Sanctuary Policy) has occurred recommended actions as to the level of participation in Ministries for the alleged wrongdoer would be determined and implemented.
- The Senior Clergy shall ensure that the following actions shall be taken:
  - Send notice of a claim or potential claim to the general liability insurance carrier and, if appropriate, the sexual misconduct liability insurance carrier
  - Cause the Media Response Plan to be implemented
  - Report the incident to the District Superintendent and the Bishop

- In addition, the Safe Sanctuary Committee may recommend the need for, and may assist in making necessary arrangements for counseling for the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer, their respective families and others who may be aware of the incident.
- Finally, the Safe Sanctuary Committee shall conduct an internal investigation to determine how to prevent such an occurrence in the future and determine if there needs to be revisions or additions to the Safe Sanctuary Policy & procedures.

### **Violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policies & Procedures**

The Director receiving a report of policy violation shall:

- Investigate & document the alleged violation
- Counsel the Worker
- Recommend corrective actions that may include dismissal from a paid position or as a volunteer

### **MEDIA RESPONSE PLAN**

The Safe Sanctuary Committee shall:

- Select a spokesperson to handle dissemination of information to staff, media and congregation. In his or her absence, the Senior Clergy will be the spokesperson
- Have ready for release, a clear position statement outlining First Church's policy regarding any abuse of Protected Persons and the established safeguards
- Select an attorney who will be present with the spokesperson while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies

The Church spokesperson shall:

- Use text or a prepared public statement to answer questions from the media and/or inform the congregation
- At all times, the identity, privacy and confidentiality of those involved shall be strictly maintained
- Keep in mind that information given to or obtained by media may have a bearing on the church's liability, so careful judgment shall be exercised
- Anticipate media questions

Guidelines for Spokesperson

- Be prepared
- Define strategy
- Be candid and honest
- Be clear, concise and in context
- Do not answer more than what is asked
- Do not volunteer information
- Do not ask for quote review
- Do respond to calls and questions as quickly as possible
- When an answer is unknown, the spokesperson shall simply state, " I don't know, but I'll do my best to find out the information for you."
- Never say "no comment"

### **POLICIES APPLICABLE TO OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS**

Any outside organization, group(s) or individual(s) who use any of the facilities of First Church, in which a protected person will be participating, shall sign the Indemnification and Release form (Appendix J) stating that they are in compliance with this policy.

However, certified leaders of the Boy's or Girl's Scouts of America using any of the facilities of First Church, shall be subject to their own respective organization's rules and regulations concerning safety of those individuals they are charged with caring for.

#### **AMENDMENT TO POLICY**

This policy may be amended as needed by the Safe Sanctuary Committee and approved by the Administrative Council of First Church and Legal Council of the Texas Annual Conference.

#### **APPROVAL OF POLICY**

This Policy for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and Youth was provided to the Legal Council of the United Methodist Texas Annual Conference in June 2005.

The Administrative Council of First United Methodist Church of Palesting Texas approved the policy on September 19, 2005.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY**

This policy was implemented in First United Methodist Church of Palestine Texas on December 31, 2005.

#### **REVISION OF POLICY**

This policy was revised in First United Methodist Church of Palestine Texas on June 1, 2015. The revision added a Re-Certification provision and packet.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Texas Family Code**

#### **TITLE 5 – THE PARENT – CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND THE SUIT AFFECTING THE PARENT – CHILD RELATIONSHIP**

##### **Subtitle E – Protection of the Child**

##### **Chapter 261 – Investigations of Report of Child Abuse or Neglect**

##### **Subchapter A – General Provisions**

##### **Sec.261-001, Definitions.**

In this chapter:

- (1) "Abuse" includes the following acts or omissions by a person:
  - (A) mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning;
  - (B) causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child's growth, development, or psychological functioning;
  - (C) physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm;
  - (D) failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child;
  - (E) sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare;
  - (F) failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child;
  - (G) compelling or encouraging the child to engage in **sexual conduct** as defined in Section 43.25 (see page 7), Penal code; or
  - (H) causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is **obscene** as defined in Section 43.21 (see page 7), Penal Code, or pornographic.
- (2) "Neglect" includes:
  - (A) the leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the .....
  - (B) ..... which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children. The term includes teachers, nurses, doctors, and day-care employees.
  - (C) The requirement to report under this section applies without exception to an individual whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged, including an attorney, a member of the clergy, a medical practitioner, a social worker, and a mental health professional.
  - (D) The identity of an individual making a report under this chapter is confidential and may be disclosed only on the order of a court or to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of conducting a criminal investigation of the report.

##### **Sec. 261.102 Matters to be Reported**

A report should reflect the reporter's belief that a child has been or may be abused or may be abused or neglected or has died of abuse or neglect.

##### **Sec. 261.103 Reports Made to Appropriate Agency**

A report shall be made to:

- (1) any local or state law enforcement agency;
- (2) the department if the alleged or suspected abuse involves a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child;

- (3) the state agency that operates, licenses, certifies, or registers the facility in which the alleged abuse or neglect occurred; or
- (4) the agency designated by the court to be responsible for the protection of children.

Sec. 261.104 Contents of Report

The person making a report shall identify, if known:

- (1) the name and address of the child
- (2) the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child: and
- (3) any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

**Sec. 261.106 Immunities**

- (a) a person acting in good faith who reports or assists in the investigation of a report of alleged child abuse of neglect or who testifies or otherwise participates in a judicial proceeding arising from a report, petition, or investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed.

**APPENDIX B**

**EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION**  
 First United Methodist Church  
 422 S. Magnolia  
 Palestine, TX 75801

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Information**

Name (Last Name, First Name, Middle Name)		Social Security Number	
Present Address	City	State	Zip Code
Phone No (____)	Referred by		
Are you under the age of 18 YES [ ] NO [ ]	Drivers License Number & State		

**Employment Information**

Position Seeking	Date you can Start	Salary Desired
Are you employed YES [ ] NO [ ]	If so, may we may inquire of your employer: YES [ ] NO [ ]	

**Education History**

Name & Location of School	Yrs Attended	Did you graduate
High School		
College		
Other		

**Employers**

Date (Month & Yr)	Name & Address of Employer	Position	Reason for Leaving
From			
To			
From			
To			
From			
To			
From			
To			

**References** Give below the names of 3 persons not related to you, whom you have known at least 1 year

Name	Address	Phone	Business/Title	Yrs Known

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**General Information**

Special training, experience, or skills, etc.

**Have You Ever...**

Been convicted of a crime other than minor traffic violations YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes, please explain
Been convicted of a traffic offense in the last five (5) years YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes, please explain

**APPLICANT'S STATEMENT**

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work. I release all such references from any liability for furnishing such evaluation to you, provided they do so in good faith and without malice. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf. Should my application be accepted I agree to be bound by the policies of this church and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my service on behalf of this church.

I understand and agree that, if hired, my employment is for no definite period and regardless of the date of payment of my wages or salary; I may be terminated at any time without any prior notice. Further, I understand and agree that no oral representations made by anyone on behalf of the employer may change the at will status of my employment and/or service with First United Methodist Church.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing releases. This is a legally binding agreement that I read and understood.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION  
 First United Methodist Church  
 422 S. Magnolia  
 Palestine, TX 75801

**Personal Information**

Name (Last Name, First Name, Middle Name)		Today's Date	
Present Address	City	State	Zip Code
Phone No ( )	Emergency Contact		
Are you under the age of 18 YES [ ] NO [ ]	Drivers License Number & State		

**Volunteer Information**

Position Volunteering For:	Experience in this area	Special skills
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**References** Give below the names of 3 persons not related to you, whom you have known at least 1 year

Name	Address	Phone	Yrs. Known

**Have You Ever...**

Been convicted of a crime other than minor traffic violations YES _____ NO _____	If yes, please explain here & on back of sheet – if needed.
Been convicted of a traffic offense in the last five (5) years YES _____ NO _____	If yes, please explain here & on back of sheet – if needed.

**APPLICANT'S STATEMENT**

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for volunteering. I release all such references from any liability for furnishing such evaluation to you, provided they do so in good faith and without malice. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf. Should my application be accepted I agree to be bound by the policies of this church and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my service on behalf of this church.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing releases. This is a legally binding agreement that I read and understood.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(For Church's Use Only)	
Certified for meeting 1 <sup>st</sup> Church Standards for Volunteers.	
Signature: _____	Date _____

**APPENDIX D**

**First United Methodist Church  
Palestine Texas**

**Safe Sanctuary Policy Agreement**

This is to confirm that I have received and read a copy of the **Safe Sanctuary Policy of First United Methodist Church of Palestine, Texas**. Additionally, I have completed Formal Safe Sanctuary Training and/or Re-Certification Review Training.

By signing this form, **I agree that I understand these policies and procedures and will abide by them at all times when working or volunteering for First United Methodist Church of Palestine, Texas.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Authorization for Background Release**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print) First MI Last

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street / P.O. City State Zip

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's License # & State \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Place of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Maiden and/or Any Other Names Used Previously \_\_\_\_\_

If less than five years at the Current Address, complete the following:

Previous Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street / P.O. City State Zip

I hereby authorize First United Methodist Church of Palestine, Texas, to request any information regarding any record of indictment, charges or convictions contained in any file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, county, state, or national file, and including, but not limited to, accusations, charges, indictments and convictions for crimes or traffic convictions, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. In connection herewith, I hereby authorize any agency (including law enforcement agencies) to release such information. I hereby RELEASE AND HOLD HARMLESS First United Methodist Church, and all of the herein referenced agencies which provide the contents of said files from all liability that may result from any said request and/or disclosure made in response to such request.

This authorization is given as part of my application for employment or volunteer work at the church. All information relative to the background investigation is confidential & any dissemination will be in accordance with state & federal law.

I certify that I have read and understand the foregoing language and that information developed as a result of my authorizing this investigation shall only be shared with the Senior Clergy and the Safe Sanctuary Committee of First United Methodist Church. I further certify that the information on this form is true and correct.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Office Use Only:** Background Verified: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved?  
Yes No

**APPENDIX E**

**EMPLOYEE & VOLUNTEER REFERENCE CHECK FORM**  
First United Methodist Church

(One Sheet per Reference)

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your relationship to the applicant?
2. How long have you known the applicant?
3. How well do you know the applicant?
4. How would you describe the applicant?
5. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?
6. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?
7. How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities?
8. How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and /or youth?
9. Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.
10. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.

Additional Comments:

Reference inquiry completed by (Print Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Age-Appropriate Discipline Methods - Children** First United Methodist Church

Our goal is to ensure that every child who participates in a Ministry is offered a safe environment where God is the center of all that we do and say.

To do this, we need the children to follow these basic rules:

1. Treat everyone with kindness and respect.
2. Follow directions given by the teacher or leader of a ministry.
3. Stay in the classroom at all times unless escorted by a teacher or leader.
4. Remember, there is no fighting, name calling or rude behavior.
5. Use all equipment properly. Treat property with respect and clean-up after yourself (remember this is God's House)

As parents and teachers we realize that children are filled with energy. However, should a child's behavior become disruptive to the class or any ministry, the following actions shall be taken.

#### **Pre-School:**

1. The teacher/leader shall redirect the child's focus to an activity.
2. A verbal warning and separation from the source of disruption  
Example: separate children, put toy away, etc.
3. Time-out in the classroom. Use this time to explain to the child why it is important to exercise proper behavior.
4. As a last resort, the parent/guardian shall be located and asked to sit with the child or remove them from the activity for that day.

#### **Elementary:**

1. The teacher/leader shall redirect the child's focus to an activity.  
Example: ask the child to help.
2. A verbal warning and separation from the source of disruption  
Example: separate children, put toy away, etc.
3. Time-out in the classroom. Use this time to explain to the child why it is important to exercise proper behavior.
4. As a last resort, the parent/guardian shall be located and asked to sit with the child or remove them from the activity for that day.

**APPENDIX G**

**Youth Covenant of Conduct**  
First United Methodist Church

**Galatians 5:22-23**

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with passion and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

I agree to participate in activities of the UMYF and other youth sponsored activities.

During these events I agree to:

- treat all persons, regardless of race, religion, and culture, with respect and consideration
- respect the facility we are using
- portray a positive role model for others by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, tact and maturity

During these events I agree to **not**:

- use profanity
- purchase or participate in the use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol
- participate in inappropriate displays of affection or sexual activity
- conduct myself recklessly such that I cause injury to myself or others
- make terroristic threat that would indicate intent to do bodily harm to self or others
- participate in criminal mischief, reckless damage or destruction of property, structures, equipment, or vehicles, and theft
- bring or use any weapon(s), fireworks, pets, pornographic materials or any other inappropriate items
- abuse others; physically (e.g. strike, spank, shake, slap), verbally (e.g. humiliate, degrade, threaten), sexually (e.g. inappropriate touching, exposure or comments), or mentally (e.g. inconsistent standards, communicating one behavior and rewarding the opposite)

**Above all, I agree to have fun at UMYF and all youth sponsored activities.**

I understand that:

- any damage that should occur because of my negligence, I am financially responsible
- all penalties are left up to the discretion of the Director of Youth Ministries, or his/her representative, with consultation of other Youth Counselors. Note that penalties may include the possibly of being sent home at the parents expense.
- The First Youth Covenant of Conduct does not cover all situations. In the event that something arises that is not mentioned, the Director of Youth Ministries, or his/her representative, reserves the right to make all necessary decisions.
- As a last resort, my parents / legal guardians shall be located and asked to remove me from the activity.

**I have read the “Covenant of Conduct” and fully agree with the conditions. I understand that I will be excused from participating in UMYF or other youth sponsored activities if I violate any conditions of this covenant.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent, if Participant is under 18

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

**APPENDIX H**

**Employee/Volunteer Agreement to Policy Form**  
First United Methodist Church

This is to confirm that I have received and read a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policies of First United Methodist Church of Palestine, Texas. Included within these policies is a legal definition of child abuse and neglect from the Texas Family Code and written information describing the Texas Laws regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

By signing this form I agree that I understand these policies and procedures and will abide by them at all times when working or volunteering for First United Methodist Church of Palestine.

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX I**

**INCIDENT REPORT**  
First United Methodist Church

<b>Location &amp; Individuals Involved</b>	
Date: _____	Time: _____
Program or Event:	_____
Location:	_____
Name of Protected Person:	_____
Supervisor of Event:	_____
Person Reporting Incident:	_____
Witness(s) to Incident:	_____

<b>Incident</b>	
Description of Incident:	_____
	_____
	_____
	_____
	(Use back of sheet if necessary)

<b>Contact with Palestine Police Department 903.729.2254</b>	
Date: _____	Time: _____
Spoke with:	_____
Reported By:	_____

<b>Contact with Texas Department of Protective &amp; Regulatory Services 800.252.3400</b>	
Date: _____	Time: _____
Spoke with:	_____
Reported By:	_____

**APPENDIX J**

**HOLD HARMLESS AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT**

**First United Methodist Church**

**WHEREAS, FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH** (“Church”), has allowed

\_\_\_\_\_ (“Organization”) to use its campus facilities;

**WHEREAS**, The Organization desires to use said campus facilities on a one time or repetitive basis:  
**NOW, THEREFORE, KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS** that for and in consideration of the Church allowing the Organization to use the Church’s campus facilities;

The Organization hereby **INDEMNIFIES, RELEASES, DISCHARGES AND HOLDS THE CHURCH HARMLESS** from and against any and all actions, claims and/or damages arising from the Organization’s use of the Church’s campus facilities;

The Organization hereby represents that it has **read** The Policy Of First United Methodist Church for the Prevention Of Abuse Of Children And Youth, and that it will adhere to all rules, policies and procedures set forth therein;

The Organization hereby agrees this Hold Harmless and Indemnity Agreement shall include all costs, including, but not limited to, attorney’s fees and costs of court;

The Organization hereby agrees that in the event that the Organization is notified of, or should have knowledge of, any action, claims and/or damages covered by this Hold Harmless and Indemnity Agreement, it shall promptly notify the Church’s Senior Clergy in writing, and the Organization shall immediately assume the cost of defense of such actions, claims and/or damages.

Executed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX K**

First United Methodist Church  
Sign-In / Sign-Out  
Register

Ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

Nursery Workers:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

#	Child's Name	Parent / Guardian's Printed Name	Parent / Guardian's Campus Location	Time Dropped-Off	Time Picked-Up	Parent / Guardian's - Signature Child Picked-up
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						

**APPENDIX L**

**Permission / Denial Form  
First United Methodist Church**

**Personal Information**

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Permission**

I give my parental / guardianship permission to allow the following adult individuals the authority to pick-up my child from Sunday School. (These individuals will be required to show identification at the time of pick-up.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

This authority is effective the date signed and will remain in effect until I amend or cancel this form.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Guardian

**Denial**

The following adult individuals **DO NOT** have the authority to pick-up my child from Sunday School.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

This authority is effective the date signed and will remain in effect until I amend or cancel this form.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Guardian



**APPENDIX N**

**First United Methodist Church of Palestine  
Consent & Emergency Release Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ give my permission to attend and participate in all activities sponsored by the First United Methodist Church of Palestine, Texas. This permission is effective from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Date) (Date)

I, authorize the adult(s) in whose care \_\_\_\_\_ has been entrusted to consent to such medical & surgical treatment as may be required upon the advise of and after consulting with a physician or dentist who is duly licensed and in good standing in the state or country where such treatment is required. Such treatment may include X-ray examination, anesthetic, and such other medically recognized medical or surgical examination and treatment and hospital care as may be required, which examination, treatment, or hospital care shall be rendered under the general or special supervision and on the advise of such physician or dentist. I will be consulted by such adult as soon as practical in the circumstances to obtain my consent (non-consent). Nothing concerning my notification shall limit the power of such adult(s) to consent to medical or surgical treatment until I notify such medical or surgical personnel that we are resuming care of my child.

I shall be liable and agree to pay all costs and expenses incurred in connection with such medical and dental services rendered.

Should it be necessary for \_\_\_\_\_ to return home due to medical reasons or otherwise, I (we) shall assume all transportation costs.

I (We) do give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to ride in any vehicle designated while attending and participating in activities sponsored by First Methodist Church, Palestine, Texas.

**Personal Data**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Physician:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Health Insurance Company:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy #: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Notarized By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_